

before the assembly, and will no doubt remain there for some years to come.

It was my privilege to attend the morning's session (Saturday, May 25) when the minority report was presented for adoption. If I understand the difference between the two reports properly, the minority favors a new declaration, and the majority a revision of the old creed. The minority report was rejected; at the next session the acceptance or rejection of the majority report will come up. The report will undoubtedly be adopted, and a committee on revision appointed to report next year.

It was an occasion of the keenest enjoyment to me to attend an assembly of over six hundred cultured, educated men, too dignified and polished to say, or do anything small or mean; the discussions were sharp and keen, withering and witty, but no signs of bad blood. Earnest men were discussing great principles from honest hearts as their consciences toward God dictated, with no personal ends to accomplish, and no person to belittle.

Of all the world's arenas there are none so great, so rich, so instructive, so exalting as the arena of a sincere, conscientious, cultured, educated religious assembly; where the glory of God and the good of man is the uppermost thought.

A SERMON

B. C. MOOMAW

"Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."—HEBREWS 6:18.

The apostle evidently has in mind the Levitical cities of refuge, to which the unfortunate manslayer might flee from the avenger of blood, and save his life until his cause could be judged by the congregation. There were seven of these cities, and they afforded a refuge for those who had taken life unawares, by accident, and without malice. According to the custom of the times, the nearest relative of the slain became his avenger, and it was his duty to slay the slayer at sight, without any judicial inquiry whatever. This was indeed primitive justice, not much better than mob law, and equally liable to abuse.

The establishment of the cities of refuge, distributed over the country so as to be accessible to all, was therefore a distinct advance upon the barbarism of that early age, and marks the Mosaic dispensation as a great civilizing agency. This is not its only distinguishing mark, but it is one of them. There had been, before that time, a widespread civilization of art, of material splendor, of architecture, agriculture, military prowess, political science; but until then there had been very little of the civilization of humanity, of equity, of mercy, so that in the midst of all their material triumphs men were ferocious, acknowledging no law but the law of the strongest arm, the keenest weapon, the biggest army.

The custom of untold ages had decreed

that the weak were the lawful prey of the strong. The masses were bondmen to the mighty. Both the soil and its tillers were the property of the monarch and his lords. Liberty had not even yet become a dream. The weaker overlord, with all his retainers, was the lawful prey of the stronger. The less mighty king, his army and his dominions, his wives, children, property, people, slaves, the lawful prey of the mightier king. The same law of violence and rapine ruled among the lower classes, even among the slaves, so that the weak had as many masters and robbers as there were stronger than he, and no man, weak or strong, "kept his goods" longer than it took "a stronger than he" to appear at his door, whether door of hut or gate of castle.

Into the midst of such a world of injustice, where every passion and every lust reigned supreme, came first the Law and afterward the Gospel, the only civilizing and humanizing agencies that have ever appeared on the earth since the beginning. When we contemplate the state of society which prevailed in those days, we can understand the apparent severity of the law. The remedy for so many venerable, entrenched, bred-in-the-bone iniquities, had to be severe. It had to create a conscience against the blood red sins of twenty centuries. This task could not be accomplished by mild methods. The sternest, the most uncompromising, often the most terrible surgery, was needed to make men conscious of the enormity of sin in all its forms, particularly of that vast iniquity of social injustice which, notwithstanding all the modifications and all the softening it has undergone in six thousand years, even yet remains the most universal sin of mankind.

This great office of the Law, to create a conscience in the race, is therefore not yet wholly fulfilled, and doesn't promise to be for several ages to come. It is today in full swing and full force. The thunders of the ten commandments have not lost any of their sonorous intensity and terror. Take this one; "Thou shalt not kill," and observe how much remains to be done until it has created a universal conscience against war. Reformers are struggling to create, even in the church, a conscience against the saloon, against the social evil, against covetousness, against a score of Goliath sins. And the tremendous odds against which they are today fighting often appals the firmest courage. Thus stands the Law even today, making the offense abound by the resurrection of that faculty, the conscience, which takes knowledge of sin.

In this world wide and age-long sense, the Law becomes a refuge for the oppressed, because it was aimed at the transgressor. It is Jehovah's dreadful sword unsheathed against the cruel and the wicked, the robber, the murderer, the tyrant, the oppressor. It constituted the charter of the world's first great democracy, where first in the history of mankind the "congregation" became judge

between man and man, and dispensed justice to the strong, protection to the weak. Six thousand years of experience in government, in progress and civilization, have only elaborated, have scarcely improved, this old Mosaic conception of government by the "congregation." It is today the highest form of government, the most splendid evolution of liberty in the world, a conception in fact to which not half the civilized world has yet risen. What is our own magnificent western liberty but government by the "congregation?" This is the climax of modern civilization, imperiled it may be by political corruption, by the money power, by rings, trusts and conspiracies, but dear to the heart of the common people, who would die to defend it, and to hand it down to their children. All political power, the fountains of justice and equity, solely and firmly vested in the "congregation," and not in any man, or set of men, or oligarchy, or aristocracy, or ring, or trust, or overlord, or king,—this, all this, the crown of our American civilization, what is it but the conception of Moses, thousands of years ago, crystalized in the first government of the chosen people. Do we not see what a world refuge this old Sinaitic Law has been, the first, the last loud trumpet blast of human liberty, its decrees to this very day furnishing the broad basis of our civil law, our government, our liberties, our prosperity and happiness.

But if the Law has thus been a refuge for the nations, how much more the Gospel. The one, external, political, dealing with the mass, dealing with temporal problems; the other dealing with the inner life, dealing with the individual, having to do with spiritual problems. For it was true and is true, that a spiritual bondage prevailed no less galling to the soul, no less inimical to human happiness, than the temporal oppressions which everywhere abounded. He that sinned was the servant of sin. It was a part of God's great thought, beginning before the dawn of time, and persevering thru the ages until time shall be no more, that the evolution of social righteousness should pave the way for the higher evolution of spiritual righteousness; that external emancipation should lead to the emancipation of the soul; that men, having once tasted of the sweets of liberty far down its stream, should seek its fountain; should ardently explore upward from political freedom, to intellectual liberty, to moral liberty, to spiritual liberty.

But this is only the beginning of the gospel, glorious beginning tho it is. There are no temporal limits, or world limits, or time limits to God's thought in the gospel. All other things with which we have to do, all other systems, thoughts, purposes, end at that boundary line which separates the world we know from the worlds that lie beyond. But this refuge, this deliverance, this liberty of the gospel sweeps on as if there were no boundary line. Blessed even in this world because it is so beautiful a refuge from sin, from sorrow, from the thousand heart aches